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TAGS: [OPDC](#) [KIRF](#) [GG](#) [AM](#)  
SUBJECT: ARMENIAN CATHOLICOS LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA  
CONCERNING RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN GEORGIA

¶1. The Ambassador received a letter from His Holiness, Karekin II, Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church addressed to President Obama regarding the outstanding issues concerning ethnic and religious minorities in the Republic of Georgia. Text of the letter follows below. The Ambassador will hand carry the original to the desk.

¶2. BEGIN TEXT:

Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin  
December 7, 2009

The Honorable BARACK OBAMA  
President of the United States of America  
Washington

Dear Mr. President,

We greet you from the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and extend our best wishes, warm salutations and pontifical blessings. We regret, however, that we must write to bring to your high attention the unacceptable situation regarding the status of religious minorities in the Republic of Georgia.

As head of the Armenian Church, our unfortunate experience over the past two decades leads us to conclude that nothing in the religious sphere within Georgia has changed for the better since the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, religious life in the Republic of Georgia today "except within the Georgian Orthodox Church" is more restricted, repressed and intolerant for ethnic and religious minorities.

After numerous years of effort and countless unsuccessful attempts to work with the Georgian government and the Georgian Orthodox Church to regulate the Armenian Church diocese and communities in Georgia, we are forced to formally bring to your attention the unresolved issues regarding: 1) the lack of legal status for religious minorities in Georgia; and 2) the Georgian government's refusal to return church buildings and church properties. We require your decisive assistance to compel the Georgian authorities to live up to their international obligations, among which are the fostering of an environment where all Christian churches, as well as religious organizations of other faiths, can operate normally and have their human rights respected and protected.

The most recent example of the Georgian government's indifference and wanton neglect resulted in the collapse two weeks ago of the historic St. Gevork of Mughni Armenian Church (built in 1356) in Tbilisi, Georgia; which is the second church we have lost in this manner. This has caused great indignation among our people and Church.

We are hopeful that your government will implement the necessary steps to positively affect this unacceptable

situation. Offering our blessings and appreciation to you,  
we ask our Lord to keep and protect you, granting you health  
and success in your high and responsible office.

With Blessings,

Karekin II  
Supreme Patriarch  
Catholicos of All Armenians

END TEXT.  
PENNINGTON